

THE ROLE OF REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN U.S. SECURITY STRATEGY:
AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEAD AMONG PARTNERS

By

Colonel Mark D. Raschke, US Army
US Naval War College

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE JUN 2014		2. REPORT TYPE N/A		3. DATES COVERED -	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The Role of Regional Organizations in US Security Strategy				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Colonel Mark Raschke				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Written at the US Naval War College Naval Station Newport Newport, RI				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release, distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT The author analyzes the regional organizations and how the United States can leverage the ongoing efforts of these organizations in the collective effort to combat transnational threats. The author first looks at transnational crime as it exists today and then some of the international organizations that are currently fighting it. Included is a brief look at three different threats in three different regions of the world, designed to provide the reader with just a sample of the myriad organizations that working to solve this problem. Finally, the author provides a recommendation on how the United States should proceed, to best leverage these organizations in further solidifying its own security.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS transnational crime, US security, regional organizations, ASEAN, NEPAD, ECOWAS, UN, UNODC					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT SAR	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 16	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

Abstract

The author analyzes the regional organizations and how the United States can leverage the ongoing efforts of these organizations in the collective effort to combat transnational threats. The author first looks at transnational crime as it exists today and then some of the international organizations that are currently fighting it. Included is a brief look at three different threats in three different regions of the world, designed to provide the reader with just a sample of the myriad organizations that working to solve this problem. Finally, the author provides a recommendation on how the United States should proceed, to best leverage these organizations in further solidifying its own security.

Introduction

Transnational crime is increasingly a threat to national security. Recognizing this threat, the United States published the *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime: Addressing Converging Threats to National Security* in July 2011 to augment the National Security Strategy.¹ In a letter at the beginning of this strategy, President Obama identifies the problem as a “convergence of transnational threats that has evolved to become more complex, volatile and destabilizing.”² He also states that these criminal networks take advantage of technology and a more interconnected world, as well as partnerships with corrupt members of other national governments.³ The document clearly identifies multiple types of transnational crime and strategy to combat each.⁴ What is somewhat limited in scope throughout the document is how to best leverage regional intergovernmental organizations and supporting non-governmental organizations. If the U.S. is going to succeed against these threats, it will largely be as a result of successful partnership with international and regional efforts. Therefore, the U.S. strategy against international crime must include increased support of regional intergovernmental organizations and supporting non-governmental organizations that can better focus on regional solutions, which are the most effective approach to eradicate transnational crime.

¹ “Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime | The White House.”

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Defining and Understanding the Threat

Transnational crime is a complex, multi-layered problem; in order to look at solutions to this problem, one must first define and understand it. In December 2000, the *United Nations Convention against Transnational Crime* provided the definition by agreeing on four components, any one of which defines what makes a criminal act transnational: 1) it is committed in more than one State; 2) it is committed in one State but a substantial part of its preparation, planning, direction or control takes place in another State; 3) it is committed in one State but involves an organized criminal group that engages in criminal activities in more than one State; or 4) it is committed in one State but has substantial effects in another State.⁵ Within this internationally accepted definition, there are many types of acts; Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) acts that the U.S. addresses in its *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime* include drug trafficking, human smuggling, trafficking in persons, weapons trafficking, intellectual property theft and cybercrime.⁶ The globalization of finance, transportation, communication, and the connectivity provided by the internet have allowed criminals and terrorists to build global networks, further complicating efforts to fight these crimes.⁷

⁵ "Understanding Transnational Organized Crime as a Security Threat and Security Theories," 43.

⁶ "Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime | The White House," 6–8.

⁷ Eilstrup-Sangiovanni and Jones, "Assessing the Dangers of Illicit Networks: Why Al-Qaida May Be Less Threatening than Many Think," 7.

Criminals and terrorists share some advantages they fully exploit. First, the talent pool: over 25% of the world's population lives on less than a dollar a day.⁸ It is this population that provides the many human trafficking victims, cheap labor for criminal enterprise, or new Soldiers for terrorist organizations.⁹ Many of these victims are often searching for a better life and often have little opportunities elsewhere.¹⁰ Second, both criminals and terrorists are able to take advantage of seams and gaps between varying nations' laws, maximizing their operations within the margins. Criminalized states further compound this issue, as senior leaders within the government are likely involved in some way with transnational crime, thereby providing refuge for Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) groups to operate.¹¹ Third, these organizations are able to capitalize on the global illicit economy, which accounts for 8 to 15 percent of the world gross domestic product.¹² To make matters worse, the world today consists of legal business intertwined with this illegal commerce, where those that traffic arms or narcotics infiltrating and gaining power within legitimate enterprise.¹³ Lastly, illicit traffic, whether for criminal or terrorist operations, utilize many of the same facilitators and nodes.¹⁴ Of the 43 terrorist organizations listed by the Department of

⁸ Soares, "Yes to Multilateralism," 26.

⁹ Press, *Convergence*, 213–214.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 76.

¹² Ibid., 213–214.

¹³ Ibid., 214.

¹⁴ Ibid., 75–105.

States, 19 have been identified by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) as having ties to drug trafficking organizations; the evidence that often ties these organizations together are the facilitators, pipelines, and nodes through which their illicit traffic traverses.¹⁵

Understanding the threat informs why nations continue to have great difficulty in fighting these networks. When looking for solutions, it is widely accepted that the international community will need to improve their own networks to defeat this threat. With this approach in mind, it is important to understand the actors that currently are involved in this fight.

Understanding and Leveraging the Actors

There are numerous organizations that address a variety of issues at the international and regional level. For transnational crime, this holds true as well; at the international level, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) leads the effort to establish standards amongst UN members.¹⁶ The United Nations *Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*, and two subsequent protocols (the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*, and the *Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air*) are the base documents providing the framework that drives efforts within the international

¹⁵ Ibid., 76–105.

¹⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME AND THE PROTOCOLS THERETO - TOCebook-E.pdf.”

community.¹⁷ More recently, the United Nations Economic and Social Council adopted a resolution defining the strategy for UNDOC for 2012-2015.¹⁸ This strategy¹⁹ updates the direction of UNODC and identifies the goals for member states in several key areas, to include transnational organized crime, terrorism, corruption, and illicit trafficking.²⁰

Strides are continually being made toward building international standards in other forums, as seen by the work of the Implementation Review Group of the United Nations Convention against Corruption²¹. The fourth session in Vienna in May 2013 identified a long list of international and regional organizations that will coordinate their efforts through the Review Group, and a follow on session in Panama City in November resulted in many nations providing feedback on their efforts to conform to established standards.²² In East Asia, cooperation is continually improving between China and ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) against multiple forms of Non-Traditional Security (NTS) issues to include human trafficking, drug trafficking, piracy,

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ "UNODC Strategy 2012-2015", 1-2.

¹⁹ This strategy also focuses on many of the enablers to help member nations succeed in the areas of prevention, treatment and reintegration, and alternative development. Section six provides the strategy for research, trend analysis and forensics and section seven discusses policy. Overall, this mechanism serves to provide a unifying document for member nations to achieve common objectives. Ibid., 3-8.

²⁰ Ibid., 2-8.

²¹ "Implementation Review Group," 1.

²² Ibid., 1-2.

cyber-attacks, smuggling, terrorism, and ethnic or religious movements, as well as natural disaster and epidemic relief.²³

Bilateral treaties and agreements are an extremely useful part of any solution, as they often allow for the maximum level of cooperation and coordination.²⁴ It is here that the evidentiary needs of two states can be addressed and met between two legal systems.²⁵ In essence, for transnational crime, this is where the rubber meets the road and definitive action is most likely to occur. However there are limitation to bilateral solutions, to include the development of gaps between agreements that criminal organizations are very adept at identifying and taking advantage of.²⁶

Regional Organizations

Regional intergovernmental organizations provide an important bridge between the efforts of nation states and the international effort led by the United Nations. These organizations build on existing bilateral agreements to create solutions that address regional issues. Examples of the types of regional issues that should be addressed and the shared approach to addressing them abound. Below are just some of the many

²³ Arase, "Non-Traditional Security in China-ASEAN Cooperation: The Institutionalization of Regional Security Cooperation and the Evolution of East Asian Regionalism," 809.

²⁴ Ristau, Zvekic, and Warlow, "International Cooperation and Transnational Organized Crime," 539.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

examples of the work that is ongoing, highlighting efforts both in different regions, and against different types of transnational crime.

South America and the Counternarcotic Fight. In South America, there are many areas that exist outside of government control, resulting in corruption and providing an opportunity for criminal actors.²⁷ Having said that, there has been much progress within the last decade, partly due to the efforts of the U.S. sponsored CARSI, the Central America Regional Security Initiative, which seeks to develop stronger governments with enhanced rule of law and provide a mechanism to coordinate the disruption of criminal activity. Originally created in 2007, CARSI trains law enforcement in the seven member countries, as well as coordinates investigative leads between nations and across law enforcement agencies.²⁸ The *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime* recognizes the need to understand regional priorities in addressing transnational crime and also recognizes that progress is being made; Colombia is just one example of a nation that has transitioned from receiving assistance to exporting law enforcement capabilities to other nations.²⁹ Colombia was also the largest contributor to the UNDOC budget for 2010-2011, providing even more money than the United States, and the counternarcotic campaign implemented by Colombia resulted in many illicit actors

²⁷ "Transnational Organized Crime, Terrorism, and Criminalized States in Latin America: An Emerging Tier-One National Security Priority," 63.

²⁸ Press, *Convergence*, 257.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 238.

moving their operations out of these nations.³⁰ These examples of slow, but steady, progress are indicative of the partnership, and progress, that will win this fight.

Africa and Strengthening Law Enforcement Capacity. Each region is unique, and Africa is no exception. When looking at Africa, it is first necessary to understand the regional organizations designed to promote development in many of these nations. NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) is the political, social, and economic partner of the African Union and as such has laid the groundwork for sustained development across the continent.³¹ It is this work that allowed multiple stakeholders such as the UNODC and INTERPOL to establish the West Africa Coast Initiative (WACI) to support the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) *Regional Action Plan to Address the Growing Problem of Illicit Drug Trafficking, Organized Crime, and Drug Abuse in West Africa*.³² WACI strategy focuses on strengthening law enforcement capability and establishes a Transnational Crime Unit (TCU) in each member nation, designed to develop operational intelligence and analyze relevant leads in the most complex cases.³³ This shared structure has the potential to build capability and systems within the region to better combat crime.³⁴ Sharing best

³⁰ Ibid., 250–256.

³¹ Rukato, *Future Africa*, xv–xvii.

³² “West Africa Coast Initiative (WACI).”

³³ WACI is the product of a multi-partner approach between UNODC, UNOWA, DPKO (UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations) and INTERPOL, and is set up to support the implementation of the “ECOWAS Regional Action Plan to Address the Growing Problem of Illicit Drug Trafficking, Organized Crime, and Drug Abuse in West Africa”.Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

practices and intelligence among partner nations is already occurring as a result of these TCUs, and WACI will expand its operations in the future to address other areas of law enforcement reform and capacity building.³⁵

Southeast Asia and Human Trafficking. In 1997, a meeting of ministers from member countries of ASEAN resulted in the *Declaration on Transnational Crime*, designed to develop regional cooperation in fighting terrorism, drug trade and human and arms trafficking; two years later, the initial *Plan of Action to Combat Transnational Crime* was developed to augment this declaration.³⁶ A lot of the work that ASEAN has been able to accomplish since these documents were published has been in partnership with Australia. The *Australia-Asia Program to Combat Trafficking in Persons* (AAPTIP) Project Design Document, developed in June 2012, is the latest collaboration between ASEAN and Australia to prevent human trafficking.³⁷ This partnership has matured since 2003, and AAPTIP is just the latest approach, building on the previous success of ARCPPT (*Asia Regional Cooperation to Prevent People Trafficking*) which operated from 2003 to 2006, and ARTIP (*Asia Regional Trafficking in Persons Project*) from 2006 to 2011.³⁸ The projects are insightful to the United States strategy for a couple of reasons. First, AusAID has invested more than 50 million (Australian) dollars through these projects in support of this security effort. This is indicative of our partners working together and investing time, knowledge and resources

³⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Transnational Organized Crime in West Africa*, 55.

³⁶ Kneebone and Debeljak, *Transnational Crime and Human Rights*, 189.

³⁷ “Final Program Design Document for the Australia–Asia Program to Combat Trafficking in Persons (AAPTIP)”, i-iv.

³⁸ Ibid, ii.

into solving this security threat regionally in a way that is very much within our best interest.³⁹ Second, the work that has been accomplished here has taken years, indicative to the U.S. that any strategy will take time and require patience to succeed. This work overcame numerous local laws and shaped local opinion to produce results; these results include the development of Anti-Trafficking Units (ATUs)⁴⁰ within ASEAN member nations.⁴¹ These ATUs lead to the development of the Heads of Specialist Units Process (HSU), which is perhaps the most tangible legacy from the ARCPPT and ARTIP years.⁴² Since 2004, the HSU has served as a formal process for communication and cooperation, and the organization now is comprised of the heads of trafficking units from all ASEAN nations.⁴³ This process is the only one of its kind in the world, but serves as an example of a regional solution that others can learn from, and whose mission is in line with shared U.S. interests.⁴⁴

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ ATUs reside within the law enforcement agencies in their countries. The strategy to establish effective communication and collaboration between these units, combined with a shared training approach that focuses on the national and provincial levels in each member nation, has expanded the law enforcement capacity amongst these nations. Kneebone and Debeljak, *Transnational Crime and Human Rights*, 193–196.

⁴¹ Ibid., 194–200.

⁴² Ibid., 195.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Since the introduction of the HSU, this system is credited with the rescue of 142 trafficking victims and the arrest of 36 suspects. The HSU is increasing capacity of the linked ATUs to effect the rescue of victims, secure evidence of the crime, and detain suspects in both the country of origin and destination. The HSU works independently of ASEAN, but work with ASEAN and member countries on coordination, training and updating laws and the legal process. Ibid., 193–196.

Moving Beyond the Counter Arguments

There are several counterarguments to a strategy that relies heavily on intergovernmental organizations. First, the effectiveness of any international or regional organization can always be called into question. With the numerous organizations that are working to eradicate transnational crime, and because of the complexity of the problem itself, it is extremely difficult to gain consensus on solutions. Yet, there is a considerable amount of important work being accomplished, such as the forums hosted by the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme Network Institutes (PNI), which was designed to “assist the International community in strengthening international cooperation in the crucial areas of crime prevention and criminal justice in the global, regional and subregional levels.”⁴⁵ Where organizations such as this need to continue to focus is providing the international framework for how to fight crime and forums to share best practices amongst actors that will enable all to improve. Shortfalls exist that need to be addressed. Systems should be refined that develop workable measures for each organization to achieve, define the requirements for data estimates and methodologies to collect that data, and clarify the analytical tools that are used. It will take years to overcome these shortfalls, and patience from international leaders to build these systems slowly, and allow regional leadership to take the lead whenever possible.

Second, transnational criminal syndicates can simply move their operations to another location if they perceive the risks in one area become too great; this is currently

⁴⁵ Makkai, “Researching Transnational Crime: The Australian Institute of Criminology,” 122.

the scenario in Central America, whose nations have fallen victim to illicit drug traffickers that have relocated from Colombia and Mexico as a result of those nations' counternarcotic operations.⁴⁶ While many argue that effectively combatting crime in one nation results in criminal enterprises simply moving their operations, this argument does not account for the increased capacity that is created to fight crime, the increased cost for criminals to move their operations, and the reduction in number of areas in which these criminals can operate. The work in Colombia and Mexico highlights progress; it is a work-in progress, but one that can continue to be built upon. As Colombia and Mexico have gained more control over this problem, they have increasingly become valuable partners in the war on drugs, and their knowledge, dedication and resources are essential to building capacity in other nations. If more nations can assume responsibility for their borders, capability to fight this problem could expand exponentially.

Third, the number of organizations whose work is tied to stopping transnational crime is vast, and it is unlikely that this collective group of organizations will ever be able to get in front of the criminal networks that they are attempting to defeat. Organizations need clear mechanisms to nest their efforts and all parties should agree on the best way to proceed in fighting these problems. Just one example of how difficult this process is lies in the records of the fourth session of the Implementation Review Group of the United Nations Convention against Corruption which met in May 2013.⁴⁷ During this

⁴⁶ Press, *Convergence*, 256.

⁴⁷ "Implementation Review Group", 1.

session, multiple organizations⁴⁸ communicated interest in participating in future sessions of the Implementation Review Group.⁴⁹ While this is indicative of how much coordination the international community should make to be effective, it is also informative that so many organizations want a seat at the table. The coordination required to be effective across these organizations is massive, but the willingness of all to work together within a single framework is highly encouraging. The United States should continue to promote this teamwork and U.S. strategy should ensure that these organizations are enabled to succeed at every turn.

Lastly, those who promote strategic restraint, such as Eugene Gholz, Darryl Press and Harvey Sapolsky in “Come Home, America” argue for a more isolationist approach for our security, preferring to focus the nation’s resources on problems within its borders. Yet even they acknowledge that one of the problems with restraint is the opportunities that we would miss.⁵⁰ Bilateral and multilateral efforts against transnational crime provide an opportunity for the U.S. to work with its partners to collectively stop this threat. The level of investment from the United States and its allies is too great to allow an isolationist approach hinder our collective dedication to eradicating transnational crime. Above all, the United States should work with the

⁴⁸ Organizations include 14 entities and institutes associated with the United Nations (such as the Counter Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), 12 Intergovernmental Organizations (including the Arab Interior Ministers Council and INTERPOL) and 4 specialized agencies that included the World Bank and World Trade Organization (WTO).Ibid., 1.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 1-2.

⁵⁰ Gholz, Press, and Sapolsky, “Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation,” 39.

international community, increasingly through regional organizations, to build the most effective solutions against transnational organized crime.

These arguments all have elements of truth, however in this increasingly globalized world, the U.S. and its partners must look to each other for solutions to these complex threats. The solutions will not reside with any single nation, region or organization, however through communication and effective coordination, the solutions will come from the collective whole.

A Recommendation

The work of the United Nations and regional organizations to fight transnational crime continues to make strides forward, yet still has a long way to go to truly be effective. Yet the more proficient U.S. partners become at fighting crime and working together to attack transnational syndicates, the collective security of all is enhanced. With the current fiscal concerns of the government (and the governments of other nations), regional solutions to transnational crime make sense wherever possible. The U.S. should continue to promote these solutions through its *National Security Strategy* and *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime*. Support of UNODC and regional organization programs cannot suffer due to fiscal constraints. Furthermore, the U.S. should continue to offer support through training and capacity building, specifically in the areas of rule of law and law enforcement. USAid and agencies within our government can look to Australia and AusAid for a model of how to partner with a regional organization such as ASEAN. These types of partnerships can prove invaluable in expanding capacity to fight TOC. Additionally, the U.S. should take the

lead in recognizing and sharing best practices and strongly advocate for systems like the ATUs and HSUs that are gaining momentum within the ASEAN countries. The TCUs in Africa are another system that is worth investing in by offering training support and to share systems and processes. These systems have great potential to increase coordination and collaboration, and standardization of rule of law and training, if adopted across the international community. The U.S. has an opportunity to take the lead in helping regional organizations, and national and regional law enforcement units, standardize their operations to make it to work not only within their regions, but globally.

The U.S. should also reinforce the role of Combatant Commands and Chiefs of Mission to foster relationships with the regional organizations that are fighting these crimes. Combatant Commanders are already engaged in this fight and should continue to be empowered to work with regional organizations when other U.S. agencies are not present to do so. U.S. ambassadors to regional organizations play a key role and can be leveraged to identify those areas where the U.S. can collaborate with these regional actors to more effectively combat transnational crime. The offices of these ambassadors can maintain an open dialogue on the needs of each regional organization while sharing the best practices from other regions or from within the U.S.

Conclusion

As globalization continues to bring countries closer together, transnational crime will increasingly threaten American security. The fight against transnational crime is

multi-faceted, with nested solutions at the local, state, regional and international level. Regional organizations are engaged in this fight, and their coordinating efforts within the guidelines of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) will ensure a global unity of effort in addressing these issues. The United States cannot fight transnational crime alone, but by engaging regional organizations the U.S. can promote positive change. As resource constraints limit options for the government in the future, this approach will provide the most “bang for the buck” in arriving at these solutions.

Transnational crime is a threat that threatens the security of all nations, not just the United States, and it will require a collaborative effort amongst the international community to successfully fight this threat. Other nations recognize the threat and are working side-by-side with the U.S., and with nations in their regions through regional organizations and initiatives. All nations have a vested interest in defeating this threat, and it is this shared bond which has resulted in progress to date. United States strategy should continue to invest in regional organizations to build on existing momentum; fighting transnational crime to ensure U.S. security is a tough task to undertake, but not one in which we can go it alone. Rather, the U.S. must lead amongst our partners, recognize the work that is already ongoing, and leverage it to our maximum benefit.